

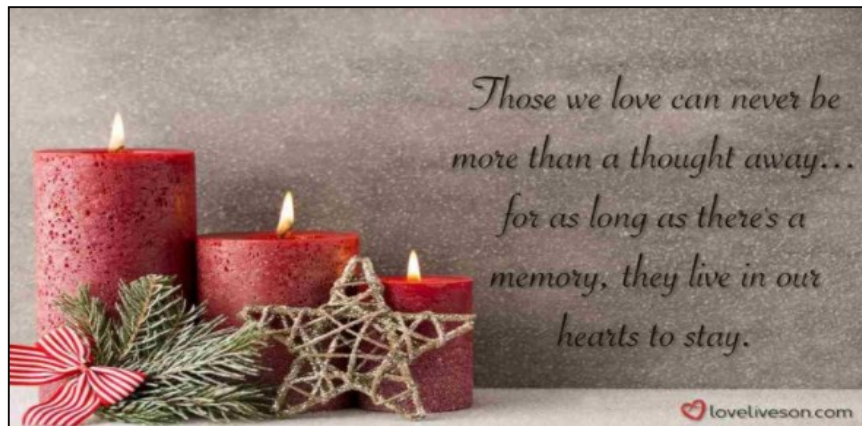


Sheldon Historical Society Schoolhouse Museum Newsletter

An update on our progress as a Society and a Chartered Museum "A New Look at Old News From our Town"

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO SENT IN YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS & DONATIONS. Currently we are open by appointment only but are available all year to answer your inquiries. Call 585-457-3061, 716-474-3156 or: townofsheldohistorian@gmail.com. Our next meeting will be Feb. 18, 2021. Welcome to our new members, Bud and Eileen Phillips. We are already enjoying your historic stories, and we look forward to having you participate. We also have a new Lifetime Member, Peter Farrell, of Glen Burnie, Maryland, a descendant of the Shuler family.

**SPECIAL THANKS TO THE KIWANIS FOR THE BEAUTIFUL CHRISTMAS TREE.
WE WISH YOU ALL A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR!**



Memories of the Last Christmas with Mama

By Mary Ann Metzger

***A true family legend retold through the years,
A heart-rending story of faith, love and tears.***

It was in January of 1936; cold, frigid weather had settled in the small rural communities in Wyoming County. The small hamlet of Java Center was particularly hard hit; perhaps it was the sentiment poured out in town for a family that was suffering. This story is about my Aunt Olive and Uncle Charlie Reisdorf and their family.

Christmas was now over; each one had received a doll from Santa, but something was not right this season.

They were saddened the past months, as Mama had been terribly ill and her condition was deteriorating. Family members and neighbors from Java Center bought food in and helped with the household duties. Their Daddy had taken the decorated tree in the bedroom to show Mama, knowing it would be her last Christmas. The children ranged in age from two months to twelve years.

(Continued on page 2)

The nine little girls remained quiet; dressed in their handmade clothing handed down from one child to the next, always kept neat and clean.



"Hail Mary, full of grace," The little girls stood vigil around their mother's bedside, praying the rosary, not fully understanding. Little Teresa led the rosary as their mother clung to her beads, and quietly she slept away; their Dad and Grandma were there closely at their side and the rosary gently slipped out of Mother's hand. I remember how Grandma devoutly read the Bible on Sundays; how she would find solace in trying to find peace with this tragedy.



Picture taken shortly before Aunt Olive died.
The youngest child was not yet born.

Aunt Olive was my Mom's oldest sister. Mom and her sisters often went up to help, but mainly it was my dear Grandma George who was the pillar they leaned on. How she and Grandpa suffered during their oldest daughter's illness; two people themselves in their later years. Aunt Olive hung onto life as long as she could; she did not want to leave her husband and nine little girls. Then she quietly found her peace, the suffering was over, and the children were left; the little ones too young to comprehend; the older ones stricken with heartache.

The frigid, blustery Sheldon and Java wind blew the deep snowbanks on the day of the funeral. Grandpa Jake and the siblings, who lived in Sheldon, could not make it to Java Center to the Mass. A neighbor tried to drive them but in vain. That was a cold, mournful day in the otherwise warm and loving home on Armbrust Road where Aunt Olive and her siblings grew up. The funeral was postponed one day, but even at that there were only a few people in attendance at the service. Grandma waited in the back of church while they proceeded with the burial; it was just too nasty for her to be out in that kind of weather.

Uncle Charlie managed with the help of a housekeeper, family, friends and neighbors. He remarried and kept the family together, having five more children. The story has a happy ending, as the nine little girls all grew up to have productive, happy lives: many of them marrying into the farming community. The family of fourteen kept close together through the years, cherishing moments with each other and keeping in their hearts memories of long ago.

It is surely an inspiration for all of us to reflect on; and I am proud to be Aunt Olive's niece. I treasure what I know of her loving ways, courage and how her children kept the ties that bind a family; although six of the little girls have passed away, leaving their families to mourn. I still get teary when I think of the story that never changes through the years; and how as the little girls grew up they knew it was their Mom in her last days that made sure they each received a special doll from Santa. Even in their later years they treasured the memory of that last Christmas when they again repeated the decades of the Rosary as they did so many years ago.



The joys and sorrows of life keep repeating, especially at the Holiday Season. We too weep tears of joy and sadness, not really understanding. It is only in our faith and the miracle of that first Christmas that we can continue the journey of life, never knowing what a "New Year" may bring.

Mary Ann Metzger
November 2006
Revised November 2020



CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS, THEN AND NOW

By Jeanne Mest

In this year of the pandemic, we have had to change our usual celebrations of special events, and now our holidays in 2020 are being affected as well. Up until now, most of us have been accustomed to “going all out”; decorating, gift giving, having parties and traveling. But Christmas was not always this way.

Victorian Christmas

200 years ago, Christmas Day was hardly celebrated at all. In England it was seen as just another day. The way we celebrate our Christmas today has some roots in the Victorian era. At the beginning of the 19th Century it usually meant just a small celebration. Before long, however, Christmas had become the biggest annual event and more like it is today. Some customs, such as the Christmas tree, may have come about due to the influence of Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, who brought the German ways of celebrating to Britain with him. Also, “A Christmas Carol”, by Charles Dickens has influenced how we think of Christmas.

Winter Solstice

Many of our traditions actually began long before Victorian times, even before the birth of Christ. Early church leaders mixed the celebration of the birth of Jesus with ancient pagan customs, which helped people accept Christianity more easily. In pre-Christian cultures that worshipped several gods, the winter solstice played an important role. It is the day of the year with the fewest hours of daylight, usually about December 22, and it marks the start of winter. The dark days around the winter solstice were lightened with feasts and decorations, especially in Scandinavia where winter makes days short and nights long.



Old Norse-speaking tribes in Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) were known as Norseman, “People of the North”, who eventually settled in Iceland, England, Scotland and Wales. Their winter solstice festivals included many rituals, including the burning of very large logs in the central hearth of their longhouse, which symbolized the continuation of light despite the darkness outside, as well as providing warmth. This custom was called “Jol”, which became the English “Yule”. Also the word “Jolly” in English and “Joli” in French (which originally meant “festive”) has its roots in the Norse “Jol”. Another Jol tradition was the sacrifice and eating of a boar, which may be the reason we have a Christmas ham.



Norse god Odin on Sleipnir

The Norseman believed that their gods came down in disguise and interacted with people. One of them was Odin, who, during the winter solstice, would drive his team of horses across the sky, led by his great eight-legged white steed Sleipnir, whose speed was so great that he could travel the earth in one night. He came through the hole in the roof and delivered wooden toys and sweet things to the children in midwinter or Yule. It is easy to see why the idea of a sleigh going across the skies caught on. Sleipnir was transformed into a reindeer in modern mythology. The gift giver developed into St. Nicholas (Father Christmas, Santa Claus).

Christmas 2020

According to historians, the winter solstice was a natural time for a feast. *“If you happen to live in a region in which midwinter brings striking darkness and cold and hunger, then the urge to have a celebration at the very heart of it to avoid going mad or falling into deep depression is very, very strong,”* said Ronald Hutton of Bristol University. *“But also it's a period when, frankly, everyone needs cheering up.”* Author Stephen Nissenbaum agreed, *“Even now when solstice means not all that much because you can get rid of the darkness with the flick of an electric light switch, even now, it's a very powerful season.”* I know I can't help but get excited thinking about Christmas and making plans with family and friends. As the song says, *“We need a little Christmas, right this very minute, candles in the window, carols at the spinet ... Yes, we need a little Christmas, now!”*

Sources: <https://www.livescience.com/25779-christmas-traditions-history-paganism.html> ;Pagan Roots? 5 Surprising Facts About Christmas, By [Stephanie Pappas - Live Science Contributor](#) December 23, 2012 <https://www.thevintagenews.com/2018/12/20/yule-christmas/>The Story of Yule – How Vikings Did Christmas, Dec 20, 2018 [Matthew Gaskill](#)

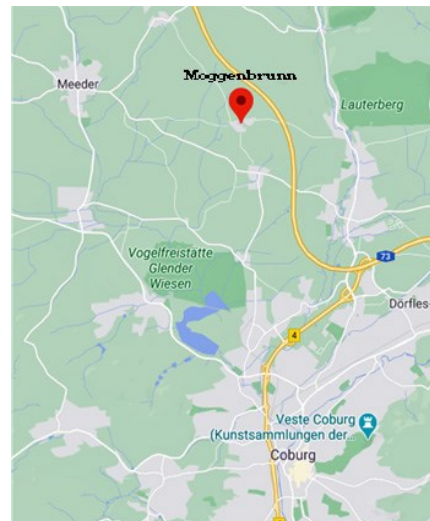
Another Milestone Anniversary!

We just learned that another couple had their 60th wedding anniversary this year. Al and Mary Ann Victor Reisdorf were married on June 11, 1960. Due to the restrictions of 2020, they postponed their celebration, but are hoping for next year. I asked Mary Ann if they were married in Varysburg at St. Joseph's, and she said actually there were only two weddings there in 1960 and they were both on the same day! “Betty Gerhardt, who lived just a couple of houses from the church, was married at 10 am to Nick Godios. I snuck down to watch her go into the Church and then tore home to get ready for our ceremony which was next. Luckily it was a gorgeous summer day. We had our reception at Sheldon Hotel, which was a booming joint back then. The Matchulets did a lovely job on the food. We spent our honeymoon at Honeymoon Haven in the Poconos.”



Al and Mary Ann Reisdorf

Maps showing the location of Moggenbrunn, Germany, where our story begins.



Leaving Germany for America

By Warren Zahler

Introduction: In the 1800s, when many people emigrated from Europe, one of the issues they faced was obtaining permission to leave. Two main requirements needed to be met, 1) the family or individual had no outstanding debts and 2) adult men had satisfied their military obligation, usually two years of required service. Basically there were two options for those who wanted to leave; obtain permission or sneak out.

Among my ancestors, there are examples of both choices. On my Mother's side, the Faulring family, who settled in the Boston valley, is an example of applying for permission and on my Father's side, the Zehler family, who settled in Bennington, decided to sneak out.

I will describe these examples in two parts.

Part 1: Gaining Permission: The Faulrings left from the small village of Moggenbrunn between 1852 and 1854, and settled in the Town of Concord, New York. At the time Moggenbrunn was in Saxony Coburg-Gotha, a small duchy in east-central Germany. Moggenbrunn is located near Coburg, site of the Ducal Government, which is best known as the home of Prince Albert, consort to Queen Victoria.

A: First to leave were Johann Peter Faulring, the oldest son, and his sister, Margarethe Elisabeth Faulring. On May 29th, 1852, they applied to Office of Justice for permission to leave for America. A four page report in the Staatsarkiv Coburg describes the results of their application. It shows that, on June 9th, the Office of Justice published a Notice of their intent to leave in a Government Paper. The Notice, shown below, gave 8 days for anyone with a claim against Peter or Elisabeth to inform the Office of Justice.

Front Page

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Regierungs- und Intelligenzblatt

für das Herzogthum Coburg.

46. Stück. Mittwoch, den 9. Juni 1852.

Das Regierungs- und Intelligenzblatt erscheint wöchentlich zweimal, Mittwoch und Sonnabend. Das Comtoir d. Bl. wie auch das hiesige Postamt nehmen Bestellungen auf dasselbe an. Der Preis ist halbjährig auf Schreibpapier 1 fl. 45 kr., auf Druckpapier 1 fl. 15 kr.

Interior Page

Der Johann Peter Faulring von Moggenbrunn beabsichtigt mit seiner Schwester Margarethe Elisabethe Faulring von dort, demnächst nach Amerika zu reisen, und sind etwaige Ansprüche binnen 8 Tagen anher vorzubringen.

Coburg, den 4. Juni 1852.

Herzogl. S. Justizamt I.
Fleischmann
i. A.

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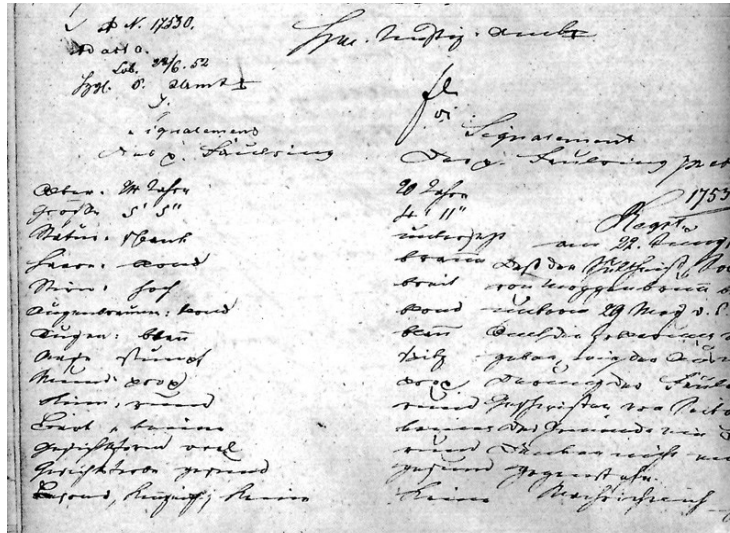
Schulden halber wird hiermit der sogenannte

The Official Publication, in the lower image,
reads in translation:

*One Johann Peter Faulring from Moggenbrunn intends, with his sister Margarethe Elisabethe Faulring from there, to travel soon to America, and possible claims should be brought here within 8 days
Duchy of Saxony office of Justice
Fleischmann/
i. 21.*

The last page of the report, dated June 22nd, records that Peter and Elisabethe were cleared to leave. The bottom of that page, seen below, has a list of the physical features of Peter and of Elisabethe, which describes the details of their appearance. This last section appears to be an Exit Permit and it is likely Peter and Elisabethe carried a copy with them when they left for Bremen and the sailing ship Richard Anderson. Peter and Elisabethe arrived at the Port of New York on August 11, 1852, and eventually made their way to the Town of Concord, Erie County, New York.

(Continued on p. 6)



Transcription of the columns:

Translation of the columns:

| Signament* des p Faulring | Signament des e Faulring | Signature* of p Faulring | Signature of e Faulring |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Alter: | 24 Jahre | age: | 24 |
| Größe: | 5' 5" | height | 5'5" |
| Statur: | stark | figure: | strong |
| Haare: | blond | hair: | blond |
| Stirn: | hoch | brow: | high |
| Augenbrauen: | blond | eyebrows: | blond |
| Augen: | blau | eyes: | blue |
| Nase: | stumpf | nose: | snub |
| Mund: | ? | mouth: | ? |
| Kinn: | rund | chin: | round |
| Bart: | keinen | beard: | none |
| Gesichtsform: | oval | shape of face: | oval |
| Gesichtsfarbe: | gesund | color of face: | healthy |
| Besondere Kennzeichen: | keine | identifying: marks: | none |

*Signatures are not on the Arkiv record, only on the actual permit

B: In 1853, Peter and Elisabeth's parents, along with their remaining children, left the Duchy for America. Friedrich was a tenant farmer, who contracted with the Duchy to rent the farmland he worked. On April 4th he applied for release from his contract and permission to leave. The request was considered by the Chamber and Rent Commission, which determined the rent owed on Friedrich's land, up to December 31, 1853. He needed to pay 38 Guilden and 44 $\frac{3}{4}$ rheincent, in order to leave Coburg.

On April 22nd the Detachment Commission confirmed that Friedrich had paid the rent and was free to leave. The Faulring family departed Coburg in October 1853 and traveled to Hamburg, where they boarded the ship Herschel. They arrived at the Port of New York on January 9, 1854, and proceeded to the Town of Concord to reunite with their son and daughter.

One should note that, in each case, money could be required to meet their obligations. This is in addition to the costs encountered in traveling between Coburg and the Town of Concord. Clearly, there was a significant cost to leaving.

- * For further information on the Faulring family and their journey to America, including translation of the German documents see: www.zahlerweb.info.
- Part 2 will follow in a future Newsletter.

Warren Zahler grew up in Boston, New York, the son of Lyle and Ethel Faulring Zehler. His grandparents were Floyd and Minnie Merlau Zahler, who are buried at the Strykersville Cemetery. After Graduation from Griffith Institute and Central School, Warren attended Alfred University and The University of Wisconsin-Madison. He then spent 30 years as a faculty member in the Biochemistry Department of the University of Missouri. He was married to the late Lucy Perez Zahler and they have two daughters and seven grandchildren.

Warren's interest in family history began in the mid 1980s and continues to this day. On his mother's side, he has researched the Faulring and Needham families, which settled in the Boston Valley and, on his father's side, the Merlau, Perry, Warren and Zehler families from the Sheldon area. In addition, he has researched his wife's roots in the Philippines. Most recently, Warren has worked on a web page at www.zahlerweb.info where he presents his family history.

From the Sheldon Schoolhouse Museum and Town Historian Jeanne Mest:

I'd like to thank Warren Zahler again for his article. Warren was one of the first people to help me when I began family history, and it wasn't long before we realized we had roots in the same town and I had known his parents for many years. My elderly aunt couldn't drive, so they had given us a ride to church every Sunday when I was a child.

Our last Sheldon Historical Society meeting for 2020 was in October, and elections were held. Betty Reisdorf, who has been our Curator for many years, has asked to take a step back, so we elected a new Curator, Barbara Logel, and a new Co-Curator and Classroom Curator, Laury Lakas.

Thank you very much to Betty Reisdorf, and her husband Frank, for all their years of dedication and hard work. There truly are no words to express how much you are appreciated. You have put in so much time and effort, and we have all learned a great deal from you.

BETTY, YOU MORE THAN CONTINUED THE WORK OF YOUR MOTHER, JOSEPHINE ALMETER, WHO RECORDED SO MUCH OF SHELDON'S HISTORY; YOU MADE IT COME TO LIFE!



Donations Received

*In Memory of Frank and Susan Bauer and Susan Louggle, by Constance Luker.
Donations were also received from Jackie Fauls, Sally Shearing, Carolyn Almeter,
Adam Vetter, Alice Hyman and Clifford Vitters. Thank you all for your generosity!*

Connie Luker of Cumming, Georgia, sent a very generous donation: "In memory of my great-grandparents, Frank and Susan Bauer, and my great, great grandmother, Susan Louggle. Without their faith, courage, sacrifice and hard work, I would not be here today. Susan Louggle's story from the family Bible was this: 'Susan came to America when she was 70 years old. It took 6 months to come across the ocean from Belgium. There were many hardships and deaths.' The more I learn about my ancestors, the more I appreciate the adherence to their values and especially their fortitude to withstand life's tragedies and tribulations. A visit to Sheldon in 2017 gave me a full appreciation for the amazing work of the members of the Sheldon Historical Society and I am pleased to make a small contribution to the ongoing work and success in their quest to preserve the history of this town and the remarkable surrounding areas."

Memorials and other Donations to the Sheldon Historical Society can be sent to:
Donna Kirsch, 4458 Richardson Rd., Arcade, NY 14009



Sheldon Historical Society Schoolhouse Museum
3859 Main Street, PO Box 122
Strykersville, NY 14145



**LAST CHANCE FOR
THE JAVA QUILT
RAFFLE!
THE WINNERS WILL
BE DRAWN ON
DECEMBER 15!**

INSIDE THIS
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A correction is needed for the October issue: My apologies to Alice Hamed for the typo in her name! Also, thank you to everyone who helped this year with proofreading, labels, ideas and encouragement.

If your newsletter arrives in damaged condition, please call or email and we will replace it.



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**WE WISH TO EXTEND A SPECIAL
THANK YOU TO THE SHELDON TOWN
BOARD, FOR ALL YOUR SUPPORT!**

Newsletter compiled by Jeanne Mest, with the assistance of creator/consultant Mary Ann Metzger, Scott Barvian and many volunteers. Submissions welcome. Email or send articles & inquiries to: Jeanne Mest, 470 Route 20A, Strykersville, NY 14145.

Newsletters can be emailed if you prefer. Also, we have large print versions available if needed. Previous newsletters are at <http://www.townofsheldon.com> or on Facebook: History of the Town of Sheldon, NY

Sheldon Historical Society Officers:

President - Michael Szucs

Vice President - Carol Felski

Secretary - Laury Lakas

Financial Secretary - Donna Kirsch

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Janet Kirsch, Barbara Logel,

Elaine Almeter, Judie Coffey, Steve Lakas

Museum Curator - Barbara Logel

Museum Co-Curator/Orangeville Historian-

Laury Lakas (laurylakas@gmail.com)

Archival Curator/Town of Sheldon Historian/

Newsletter Editor - Jeanne Mest

(townofsheldonhistorian@gmail.com)

Sheldon Historical Society Membership

Being a member of the Sheldon Historical Society means being part of preserving history. Dues and donations support the maintenance of our museum and historical artifacts. As a member you have voting privileges, and newsletters are sent to you at no cost.

The membership year runs from June through the following July.

Please remember to renew yearly, and let us know of any address changes. If you are currently a member, thank you for your support!

For an appointment or assistance, call (585)457-3061, (716)474-3156, (585)457-3444, or email: townofsheldonhistorian@gmail.com

Membership Application or Renewal

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Email _____

_____ **\$10 New Annual Membership**

_____ **\$10 Membership Renewal**

_____ **\$75 Lifetime Membership**

_____ **Wish to make a Donation**

Please send a check payable to the Sheldon Historical Society
Mail To: Donna Kirsch, Financial Secretary, 4458 Richardson Rd.,
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